



Self-Care – Indigestion (Dyspepsia) Guidance **in Care Homes**

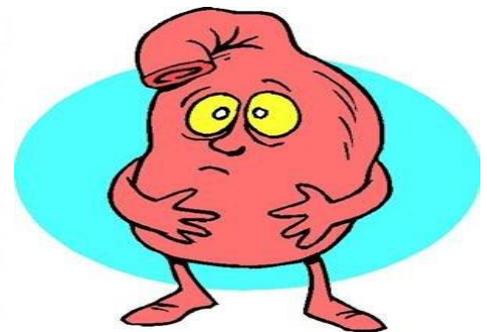
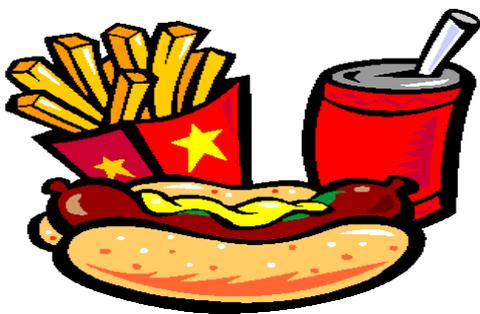
Taking care of your “SELF” – Supporting Everyone to Live Freely

This is a self-care guide designed for those working in care homes, residential homes and assisted living.

The information provided in this guide does not replace person-centred clinical advice.

The following information should be used as a guide when advising or purchasing self-care treatments for people residing in a care home, residential home or assisted living. Self-care medication and medical products are not always the most appropriate choice for treating minor ailments. Sometimes starting with a lifestyle change or trying natural remedies can be more effective.

Should you have any concern, at any time around self-care items being purchased on behalf of the resident or being brought in by relatives for the residents use, please discuss with your community pharmacist or GP practice.



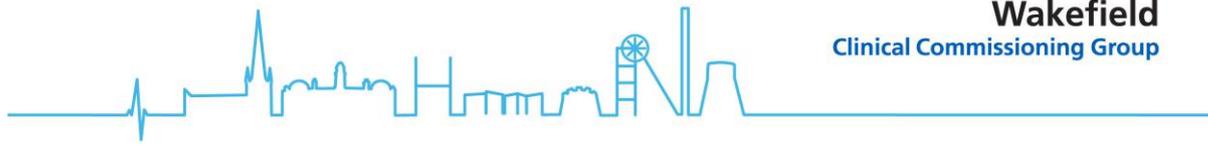
Most people will experience indigestion at some point. Having indigestion is not usually a sign of anything more serious and can usually be treated with self-care.

Warning

More serious conditions can often present or have similar symptoms to indigestion (dyspepsia). These symptoms can often be referred to as RED FLAG symptoms.

Always seek advice from the pharmacist or GP if you are concerned about a resident’s condition

RED FLAG symptoms are often more severe and persistent than indigestion symptoms alone, these symptoms will not be relieved by the usual self-care remedies.



Residents may complain that the symptoms are worsening, they may also complain of one or more of the below:

- Upper abdominal pain
- Central chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Persistent vomiting
- Haematemesis (vomiting blood)
- Tar-like stools (melaena)
- Bleeding from rectum
- Feeling faint or even collapse
- Difficulty swallowing
- Unexplained fever
- Unintentional weight loss or night sweats
- An upper abdominal swelling or mass

Some of these symptoms may suggest a gastrointestinal bleed which would be classed as a **Medical Emergency. Others may indicate possible cancer and therefore should prompt urgent investigation.**

What is Indigestion (Dyspepsia)?

Indigestion is a term that describes pain and discomfort, and occasionally other symptoms which come from your upper gut (the stomach, oesophagus or duodenum).

What causes Indigestion?

- Stomach acid can irritate the stomach lining or throat causing indigestion
- Some medicines can cause indigestion eg non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) – ibuprofen, naproxen
- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Stress can make indigestion worse
- Some medical conditions can cause indigestion

What are the symptoms of Indigestion?

Some symptoms you may experience include:

- Bloating
- Belching and passing wind
- Quickly feeling full after eating

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- Feeling sick (nausea)
 - Being sick (vomiting)
 - Heartburn – a painful burning feeling in the chest, often after eating
 - Bringing up food or bitter tasting fluids

How to treat Indigestion:

- There is a variety of medicines available to purchase over the counter to treat the varying symptoms of indigestion. These medicines can be purchased from local community pharmacies, shops and supermarkets
- A pharmacist can offer advice on the best indigestion remedies depending on the symptoms
- It is usually best to discuss treatment options with the resident's usual community pharmacy; they will have knowledge of the resident's regular medicines and this will help them recommend the best treatment
- If you are not seeking advice from the residents regular community pharmacy, always take a list of the residents usual medications so that they can check for drug interactions and advise the most appropriate option

Natural remedies and self-help tips for treating Indigestion:

While there is no firm evidence to support the effectiveness of natural remedies many people do find benefit in using them. You may want to discuss the following natural remedies with residents as they may wish to purchase them or have you purchase them on their behalf. Always check there are no interactions between natural remedies and the resident's usual medicines. You can do this by talking to their usual community pharmacist.

Ensure residents do not have swallowing difficulties or interactions before advising the following:

- Some people find that sipping on a cup of hot kettle water eases indigestion (this should be left to cool a little to prevent risk of scalding)
- Flat cola
- Stirring a teaspoon of baking soda into a glass of water and drinking it. This solution is thought to neutralise stomach acid and helps relieve gas and bloating. Adding some lemon juice is believed to help prevent gas
- Mixing a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar with half a cup of water is thought to be effective in reducing indigestion, especially following more indulgent meals
- Ginger tea is often used to relieve symptoms of an upset stomach and is thought to aid in improving digestion
- Camomile tea is also thought to relieve symptoms of indigestion. It is believed to calm the stomach and soothes the intestinal tract
- Putting one and a half teaspoons of dried peppermint in a cup of hot water is thought to relieve symptoms of indigestion



DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise the resident to cut down on tea, coffee, fizzy drinks or alcohol if they consume these drinks regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eat just before bedtime as this can encourage the production of acid. It is advised to eat your last meal 3 to 4 hours before you sleep
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise when the resident gets into bed that they use pillows to prop up their head and shoulders. By doing this you will help prevent stomach acid coming up while they sleep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eat rich, spicy or fatty foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the resident is overweight you may want to discuss this with them as well as possible weight loss options. You may be asked to seek advice around what options are available by the resident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take ibuprofen or aspirin as these medicines can make indigestion symptoms worse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chewing food slowly will reduce the amount of gas you swallow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - smoke

You should only need to contact the GP:

- **If the resident shows or complains of any RED FLAG symptoms**
- **If you have any concerns about the residents condition**

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References:

Self-Care Fact Sheet: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/SC-Oct12.pdf>

Patient website: <https://patient.info/health/dyspepsia-indigestion>

NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/indigestion/>

Natural advice: <http://www.besthealthmag.ca/best-you/home-remedies/natural-home-remedies-indigestion/>